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FOR SALE - Public timetables, Traction Timetable Reproductions, North Shore Line Annual Reports (1917 to 1948), maps, brochures, railroadiana, etc. Send 20¢ for Catalog 7: Herb Danneman, 14425 Woodland Place, Brookfield, WI 53005.

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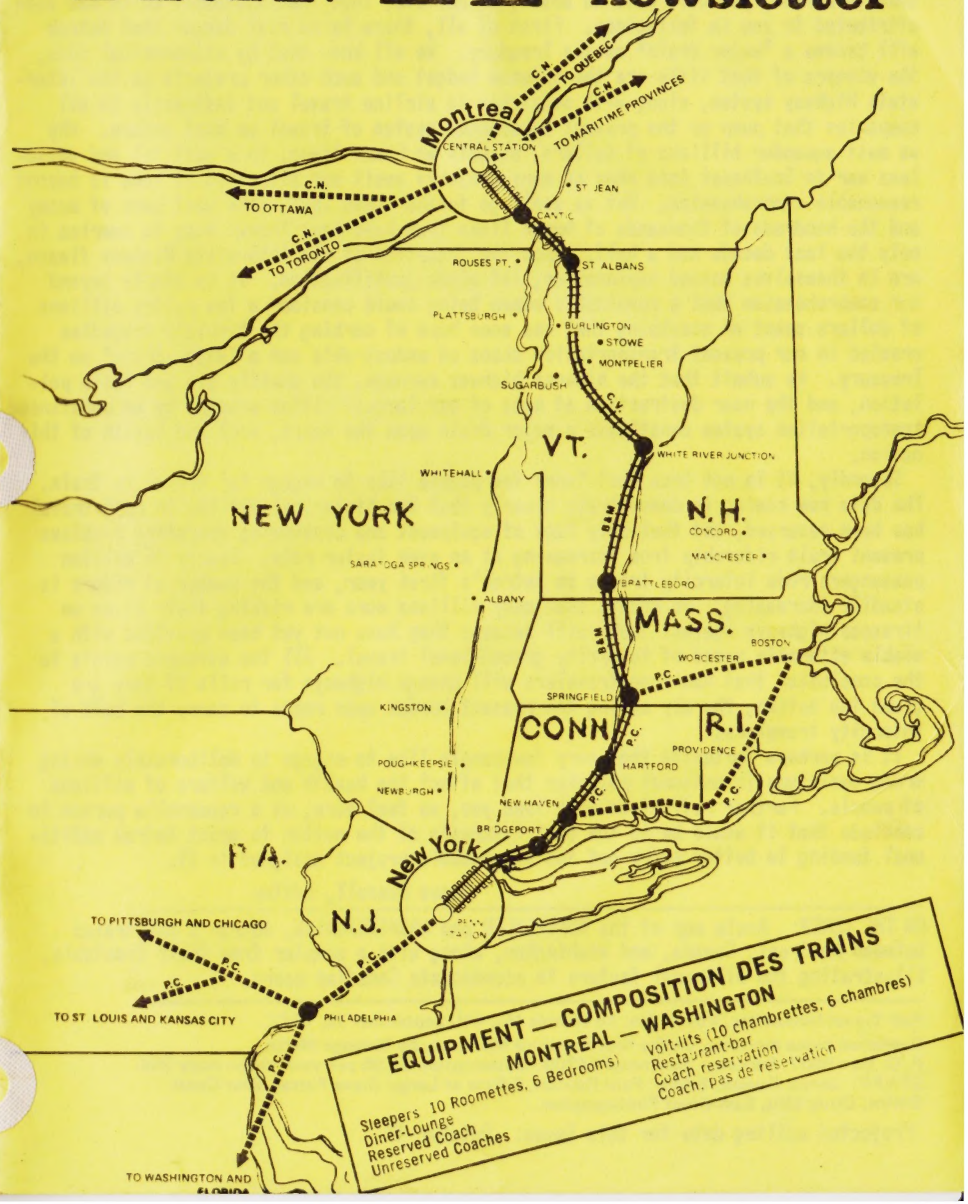
A GREAT MANY BACK ISSUES of Rail Travel Newsletter are still available. This issue is number 44. Vol. 1, which started with the first Monday of December, 1970, contains 26 issues. Vol. 2 started January 1972. Many issues of Vol. 1 are now solc out; Vol. 2 is nearly complete. Back issues cost 25¢ each. If you are a subscriber, we will credit your present subscription with any missing issues you order, unless you indicate otherwise. Write to address above.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 2 NO. 18
SEPTEMBER 18, 1972
#44



EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER TO CASPAR WEINBERGER

Dear Mr. Weinberger:

We used to enjoy watching your program on San Francisco's educational television station. You always impressed us as being a fair and reasonable person. At least that was the image the tube projected. Now that you head the Office of Management and Budget in Washington, we would like to appeal to you as a fair and reasonable person on behalf of America's crisis in transportation.

You have been quoted as saying that Amtrak "shouldn't become a major drain on the Treasury just to support an activity very few people like to engage in." As a reasonable person, you will have to admit, we believe, that that statement which has been attributed to you is fallacious. First of all, there is no real danger that Amtrak will become a "major drain" on the Treasury. We all know that by astronomical odds, the winners of that title are the defense budget and such other projects as the Interstate Highway system, along with subsidies to airline travel and indirectly to oil companies that pump up the present unbalanced system of travel we must endure. Why we must squander billions of dollars, as well as human lives, in a wasteful and senseless war in Southeast Asia when so many projects await our attention at home is beyond reasonable comprehension. But we won't go further into that. The vast sums of money and the hundreds of thousands of human lives that have been thrown away in America in only the last decade and a half, since the inception of the Interstate Highway fiasco, are in themselves beyond explanation, let alone justification. It is simply beyond our comprehension that a reasonable human being could consider a few paltry millions of dollars spent on something that has some hope of curbing the terrible tragedies created in our present transportation chaos as undesirable and a "major drain" on the Treasury. We submit that the hideous highway carnage, the ghastly air and noise pollution, and the near destruction of many of our largest cities wrought by an unbalanced transportation system constitute a major drain upon the heart, soul and health of this nation.

Secondly, it is not true that "very few people like to engage in" travel by train. The data now coming in demonstrate clearly that the historical decline in rail travel has been reversed, and that only lack of equipment and continuing operating problems prevent train ridership from increasing at an even faster rate. Nearly 16 million passengers rode intercity trains in Amtrak's first year, and the number of riders is steadily increasing. We submit that many millions more are risking their lives on tiresome highways against their will because they have not yet been provided with a viable alternate means of intercity ground-level travel. All the evidence points to the conclusion that American travelers will change highways for rails if they are given the option, thereby easing the present burden upon roads to carry the bulk of intercity travelers.

It is perhaps fortunate that very few people like to engage in deliberately making wrong decisions in national policies that affect the health and welfare of millions of people. Further reflection will lead you, we feel sure, as a reasonable person to conclude that it would be in the best interests of the nation to grant Amtrak additional funding to better carry out the commendable project assigned to it.

James Russell, Editor

ON THE COVER: Route map of the MONTREALER and WASHINGTONIAN, Amtrak's new trains between Montreal, Canada, and Washington, along with a sampler from their timetable, illustrating the bilingual feature to accommodate Canadian users.

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STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor at Large; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; Doug Ellis, East Coast Photographer.

Projected mailing date for this issue: October 13

FIRST AMTRAK TRAIN TO MONTREAL

Amtrak's new service to Montreal, initiated by Congressional mandate and funding, got underway on schedule September 29 (see EAST COAST REPORT, starting on p. 5, for a full report on the first runs). The MONTREALER and the WASHINGTONIAN, trains 60 & 61, are Amtrak's designations for the new services, following the old names used on the route in the days when running time was about an hour faster than the present approximately 17 overnight hours.

Amtrak issued a 4-page timetable for the trains, printed in English and French and showing condensed major connections at Montreal. A similar schedule was issued for the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, dated Oct. 15, showing all connections at Vancouver.

AMTRAK SAYS IT WILL PRESS FOR EXPANSION OF SERVICE

Apparently buttressed by newly released statistics showing improvements in ridership and revenues, and by a public opinion survey that showed solid nationwide support for federal subsidies of train service (see reports elsewhere in this issue), Amtrak President Roger Lewis has said that Amtrak would not seek to drop any routes next July, but instead would aim to expand the present system. He indicated that his corporation would ask Congress for the $57 million additional that it approved earlier this year but that was held back by the White House's Office of Management and Budget. "We're going to ask Congress for it with or without budget office approval," one Amtrak official told the Wall Street Journal late last month. Amtrak wants the extra money for capital spending--new equipment and improved track.

The survey indicated that 4% of the population uses trains. If this were increased to only 8%, Lewis said, Amtrak would about reach the break-even point in revenues. This expectation of doubling ridership is entirely reasonable, according to the poll, since very many more than that percentage of Americans are favorably disposed to train riding. Said Lewis, "(The public) are willing to trade off some speed for the benefits of personal comfort, the freedom to get up, stretch and walk around in transit, take in the sights and travel safely--all at reasonable fares. For these passengers the travel experience, of itself, is significant. As Amtrak continues to improve the quality of this experience, it is reasonable to project that within a few years, a potential 8% of the public may travel by train--doubling the number of our passengers."

Meanwhile Federal Railroad Administrator John W. Ingram was making light of Amtrak's efforts. He told an AAR group in San Francisco Sept. 21 that "The short-haul trains are the real money losers. The Kansas City-St. Louis run, for example, has so few passengers it would be cheaper for us to buy each one a Cadillac convertible and drive the route. But I don't think that's exactly what the government had in mind when it set up Amtrak."

SMALL PACKAGE SERVICE INITIATED BY AMTRAK

Amtrak has begun a service of carrying small (under 10-lb) packages on its N.Y.-Washington METROLINERS, storing them in locked cabinets in the snack bar coaches. The prediction is that once the service is expanded it will bring in a half million dollars per year for Amtrak. By the end of the year the service will be extended to N.Y.-Boston, then later to several routes out of Chicago. The West Coast will have the service next spring, it is planned, though the tri-weekly trains north of Oakland make that route difficult for such a delivery service. Other long-distance cross-country trains will have the service in the future.

REVIVAL OF THE SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT?

The San Joaquin Valley of California has been without train service since the discontinuance of the Southern Pacific SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT and the Santa Fe SAN FRANCISCO CHIEF May 1, 1971. Now four Valley Congressmen have asked Amtrak to make a study of returning service to the area, and the report came out late in September that a route was under consideration and that Congress would be asked to appropriate extra funds to Amtrak to initiate service. Trains could begin running by Christmas if Washington were to act promptly. However, this is unlikely, since Congress will adjourn soon and may not act on the service this session.

The proposed route would run from Oakland on SP tracks to Martinez, thence on Santa Fe to Stockton, and on SP to Bakersfield. The line would terminate there, with a bus connection to Los Angeles as under the old Santa Fe arrangement. Sacramento would not have a rail connection with this route, unlike arrangements under the days of SP service, when the SACRAMENTO DAYLIGHT connecting train met the SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT near Stockton.

Amtrak's study estimated a deficit of $517,000 for the first year, with revenues of $555,000. If the estimated first-year ridership doubled, the service would break even, Amtrak reported. The White House Office of Management and Budget must approve the plan before it could become effective.

TRAGIC MEXICAN TRAIN WRECK

The second worst train wreck in Mexican history occurred around midnight of October 5 when a 20-car Mexican National Railways train derailed near Saltillo with 1564 adults and an uncounted number of children aboard. The train was on a downhill curve and reportedly traveling at about 75 mph, about double the speed limit for the curve. At last count at least 208 people died and 1198 were injured. The train was packed with Mexican peasants returning from a religious pilgrimage to Real de Catorce. The train crew are being charged with homicide. The engineer was reported to have been drinking, but he claimed the brakes failed. Railway authorities rejected the claim of equipment failure. One of the 7-man crew was reported to have fled, while the rest were under arrest. The fireman admitted that the crew had two or three drinks of tequilla after they let three women aboard with three bottles of the liquor. But he said the cause was brake failure and that the drinking had no connection with the accident.

POLL SHOWS OVERWHELMING PASSENGER TRAIN SUPPORT

Last May Amtrak ordered a $200,000 poll by Louis Harris to gauge the American public's attitudes toward passenger train service. The results of the nationwide survey were released October 4, and they were very favorable indeed toward continued passenger service.

Of 3000 persons interviewed (about double the number used in political polls), 64% said they favored continued service even if it requires federal subsidies. Only 22% responded unfavorably. By an even greater margin, respondents said they felt the public should have the option of passenger train service. On this question the split was 82 to 10%. A majority of interviewees, 53%, said they believe the federal government has "a responsibility to see that vital and important passenger train services are improved with tax dollars."

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

FIRST RUNS OF THE MONTREALER AND THE WASHINGTONIAN

Your East Coast Editor rode the first runs of the MONTREALER and the WASHINGTONIAN all the way. Not since Amtrak's inception has there been such a celebration along an Amtrak route, for the first run of the MONTREALER created perhaps more sensation than even the Turbo tour of 1971.

I purchased a military fare ticket to Montreal from a befuddled ticket seller at Washington Union Station, and I saw that every ticket window was open and had a considerable line. Every window is now set up to sell Metroliner tickets and each seller has a Xerox machine to photograph tickets, I.D. and checks of those paying by check. This speeds up the lines considerably.

My ticket was amazing--it read Penn Central all the way to Montreal! Other variations encountered on the train included Amtrak all the way; PC-Springfield-B&M-Windsor-CV-CN-Montreal; and some showed White River Junction as the B&M-CV interchange point.

Soon a bagpipe band made its way thru the Friday crowds in the concourse and the gate was opened for the MONTREALER. The all-Amtrak consist had 2 GG1's (not 3 diesels as the Amtrak press release stated) & 14 cars--5 coaches (one a snack bar), 1 reserved coach, diner-lounge, 3 sleepers, diner-lounge, 2 more sleepers, and a private sleeper-lounge. There were no leg-rest coaches, altho the 2nd MONTREALER had them. As the crowd boarded, they were given booklets on Montreal, and later on the train they received miniature Canadian flag and Amtrak lapel pins. The sleepers contained VIP's, including Congressmen and J.W. Barriger of B&M.

The entire crew except trainmen wore the new Amtrak uniforms. The dining car crews were so exceptional that they must have been hand-picked. Some were veterans of the 20th CENTURY and the CAPITOL. All train-service employees were Penn Central and they made the entire roundtrip to Montreal. One newly-hired coach porter, when asked whether he was PC or Amtrak, replied "I don't know. I haven't gotten my first paycheck yet!"

The first leg to New York went off without a hitch, with the exception of having a few standees Philly to New York and the total failure of the electrical system in the head diner at Newark. This could not be repaired during the run, so the car made the entire roundtrip offering meals and drinks by candlelight. As far as the passengers were concerned, this only added to the holiday atmosphere, as the weather was cool, but it was hard on the crew. The diners even had collector's-item menus lettered "THE MONTREALER" and "THE WASHINGTONIAN."

The train held to time to Stamford, where the first trainside celebration was held. The mayor welcomed Amtrak President Roger Lewis to Connecticut while the flashbulbs popped. At Bridgeport, a small crowd was on hand with sparklers and a local VIP boarded. There was no crowd to speak of at New Haven, where 3 freshly-shopped Amtrak E unit engines took over.

Meriden provided the first big crowd, as 500 or more welcomed the train in. Fire trucks were on hand with flashers and sirens going. The mayor presented Roger Lewis a plaque, and speeches were exchanged. Bear in mind that at this point it was almost midnight, as the celebrations were causing the schedule to fall apart. Yet more crowds were to come, and every station platform seemed to have tables with coffee, champagne and cookies for the revelers.

Berlin: Firecrackers, fire trucks, speeches.

Hartford: The mayor, dressed in engineer's denim, helped Dave Watts, Amtrak's

(continued on p. 12)

AMTRAK RELEASES STATISTICS ON RIDERSHIP, TIMEKEEPING AND FINANCES

Just as we went to press with the last issue of RTN, Amtrak released to the public data on the on-time performance of its trains by route for the months of July and August and for the year to date. These data are tabled below and at the bottom of the next page. Also released were data on number of passengers carried, segregated by railroad, for the months of June and July and for the same two comparison months of 1971. These figures, for the two months combined, are tabled on pages 8 and 9. In a separate "Summary Report to Shareholders" Amtrak released figures on its operating revenues and expenses for the Fiscal Year 1972 and for the first two quarters of this year. We have reprinted these data on page 7.

Amtrak summarized its on-time performance data in its press release by highlighting the 72.4% average of all trains in August, pointing out that the performance was up 4.5% over July. ("On-time" was defined as within 5 minutes of timetable schedule.) Amtrak said the main causes of delays were "equipment malfunctions, freight train interference, heavy passenger loads often requiring two stops at stations, waiting for connections, slow orders, and track maintenance and repair."

The ridership figures for May showed a 28.1% increase over May, 1971, and President Roger Lewis commented that "the American public is beginning to respond to Amtrak's drive to restore rail passenger service." METROLINER traffic alone was up 60.5% for that comparison period.

NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION
ROUTE BY ROUTE SUMMARY
ON-TIME PERFORMANCE
AUGUST 1972

Routes	Trains Operated Aug '72	Per cent On-Time Aug. 1972	July 1972	Since Jan. 1
SHORT HAUL				
New York/Washington				
Metroliner	834	83.2	55.9	76.4
Conventional	857	97.4	95.1	94.7
Boston/Washington	395	59.2	42.4	60.6
New York/Boston				
Shore Route	185	70.8	83.1	79.8
Inland Route	449	93.1	87.2	87.3
New York/Buffalo	309	82.5	77.1	78.9
Philadelphia/Harrisburg	486	44.9	63.1	81.0
Washington/Parkersburg	62	77.4	62.9	72.0
Chicago/Carbondale	62	82.3	90.3	81.4
Chicago/Detroit	124	89.5	92.7	92.3
Chicago/Quincy	62	67.7	88.7	74.4
Milwaukee/St. Louis	124	84.7	75.8	74.5
Chicago/Milwaukee	186	95.7	94.6	94.3
Seattle/Portland	186	89.2	75.0	78.2
Oakland/Los Angeles	36	97.2	80.0	88.0
Los Angeles/San Diego	160	90.6	88.7	94.5
TOTAL SHORT HAUL	3683	80.7	79.4	85.0
LONG DISTANCE ROUTES				
New York/Chicago	62	19.4	0	59.0
New York/Florida	248	36.7	38.4	53.7
New York/Kansas City	62	0	64.6	28.0
Washington/St. Louis	62	27.4	48.3	51.0
Chicago/Washington	62	16.1	36.7	50.8
Cincinnati/Washington	62	40.3	24.2	52.5
Chicago/Newport News	62	29.0	22.2	50.8
Chicago/Florida	124	69.4	66.9	59.9
Chicago/New Orleans	62	9.7	17.7	25.9
Chicago/Houston	62	71.0	61.3	80.5
Chicago/Los Angeles	124	51.6	66.9	67.6
Chicago/Oakland	62	51.6	62.9	68.5
Chicago/Seattle	62	54.8	58.1	56.6
Chicago/Minneapolis	36	77.8	86.1	85.1
Chicago/Minneapolis/ Spokane	26	38.5	73.1	61.2
New Orleans/Los Angeles	26	34.6	76.0	61.2
Seattle/San Diego	26	34.6	37.0	60.7
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	1230	40.2	44.5	56.4
TOTAL AMTRAK	5747	72.4	67.9	76.4

Statement of Operations

(Unaudited – Dollars in Thousands)

	Twelve Months Ended June 30, 1972 (FY 1972)	Three Months Ended March 31, 1972	Three Months Ended June 30, 1972	Six Months Ended June 30, 1972
Operating Revenues	$152,709	$ 36,189	$ 38,241	$ 74,430
Operating Expenses:				
Services provided by railroads[1]	$288,521	$ 73,619	$ 73,719	$147,338
Services performed by Amtrak[2]	10,565	3,131	4,292	7,423
Amtrak general & administrative[3]	7,093	1,799	2,417	4,216
	$306,179	$ 78,549	$ 80,428	$158,977
Net Loss	$153,470	$ 42,360	$ 42,187	$ 84,547

[1]Expenses billed by railroads, minus credits actually received following audit findings.

[2]Expenses incurred by Amtrak for functions assumed or in process of being assumed by Amtrak.

[3]Corporate office expense including wages and salaries, advertising, depreciation, interest, etc.

SUMMARY OF TOTAL PASSENGERS

For the Two Months Ended June 30, 1972 and 1971*

	1972			1971			Percent Increase/ (Decrease)		
	Coach	Sleeper and Parlor	Total	Coach	Sleeper and Parlor	Total	Coach	Sleeper and Parlor	Total
The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company	136,912	14,191	151,103	125,317	14,987	140,304	9.3%	(5.3)%	7.7%
The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company	16,496	-	16,496	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burlington Northern, Inc.	106,642	15,865	122,507	78,279	13,023	91,302	36.2	21.8	34.2
The Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company	8,554	848	9,402	8,618	489	9,107	(0.7)	73.4	3.2
Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company	77,960	5,250	83,210	52,964	3,188	56,152	47.2	64.7	48.2
Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad Company	35,695	1,884	37,579	24,299	2,149	26,448	46.9	(12.3)	42.1
Illinois Central Railroad Company	54,532	1,305	55,837	63,169	278	63,447	(13.7)	369.4	(12.0)
Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company	6,366	1,885	8,251	6,047	1,535	7,582	5.3	22.8	8.8
Missouri Pacific Railroad Company	6,842	745	7,587	3,758	192	3,950	82.1	288.0	92.1
Penn Central Transportation Company	1,959,105	82,161	2,041,266	1,741,588	75,462	1,817,050	12.5	8.9	12.3
Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company	49,963	6,464	56,427	53,506	5,888	59,394	(6.6)	9.8	(5.0)
Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company	98,537	13,072	111,609	97,578	10,891	108,469	1.0	20.0	2.9
Southern Pacific Transportation Company	43,826	7,118	50,944	33,391	6,153	39,544	31.3	15.7	28.8
Union Pacific Railroad Company	7,053	2,590	9,643	4,775	2,234	7,009	47.7	15.9	37.6
Total	2,608,483	153,378	2,761,861	2,293,289	136,469	2,429,758	13.7	12.4	13.7

* Totals for the two months May & June 1972 compared with the same two months of 1971.

Readers as Riders

RTN READERS TELL OF THEIR EXPERIENCES ON THE RAILS THIS SUMMER

The biggest change has been in dining car service. The prices are very reasonable and tho the menus are limited, the food is good for the prices charged. The attitude of the dining car personnel was generally very pleasant, particularly considering the difficult conditions under which they work. The diners were well patronized. From Denver to Chicago there was a line waiting to get into the diner, and it took several hours to serve all the patrons.

The cars are cleaner and more attractive than before Amtrak, tho outside windows could be washed more (returning thru the Sierra, the morning sun shining thru dirty windows made it difficult to see the scenery). The trip from Oakland to Denver was particularly pleasant--friendly crew, the train two-thirds full, and the passengers friendly and seeming to enjoy the ride.

The biggest problem that I noted was the one that other commentators have stressed: the difficulty in buying tickets and in particular in obtaining reservations. Two passengers mentioned their difficulty in reaching the Oakland station by phone. Altho I applied for reservations some three weeks in advance at San Jose, after two weeks the return reservations were not made, and I finally bought the ticket without Denver-Oakland reservations.

The air conditioning was left on at night from Ogden-Oakland, even tho it was mid-September and cold outside. By early morning it was miserably cold in the coach (I was wearing a lined jacket and a sweater by then) and passengers were unable to sleep because of the cold. Finally a crewman came thru the car and I asked him to turn on the heat. Then, of course, it got much too warm. Surely someone should be responsible for checking temperatures, particularly in the middle of the night.

The car in which I was riding on the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR from Chicago-Denver derailed about 4am in Nebraska. It was quite an experience to awake and realize that the wheels underneath my seat were bumping over the ties. Fortunately, the car did not overturn. When I went to see what had happened to the cars behind, it was a shock to find that there was no sign of the rest of the train (it was nearly a mile back down the track, and three cars were derailed, one on its side).

Our train was about 10hrs late arriving in Denver because of the derailment. The officials did get us breakfast (around 10-11am) and later lunch (around 3pm) which they paid for. However, it seemed a long time before anyone could make a decision as to what to do with us. Neither crew nor officials seemed to know much about what to do to handle an emergency. I particularly resent their inability to inform passengers the reason for the long delay--it would help allay rumors and uncertainty if the passengers were told what was happening and what was planned during any delay or emergency.

John W. Patton

Fremont, Calif.

I am just home from 6 weeks in Europe where my wife and I used Eurailpass for some 5500 miles of travel. We had only one late train--D220, from Wein to Frankfurt on September 28. The Austrians delivered the train to the German Federated Railroads 25mins late, and it arrived in Frankfurt 20mins off. Those train schedules are not geared to "making up" time. I suppose, too, that the frequency of trains on a given run often cause a train running late to not "fit the pattern" of other trains on time.

Can you imagine 1200 trains a day into one terminal? That is what we were told about the central station at Koln. We saw steam in operation--both on passenger and freight trains! Each time in Germany. Electric power is surely great. I could go on but won't I do have great respect for the European railroads.

E. H. Swift

Sonoma, Calif.

For part of my vacation this summer, I traveled to the West Coast via train, driving from Baltimore to Galesburg, IL and leaving my car there. Four different sets of equipment on three trains were sampled... My biggest problem? Getting space in the first place before departure. This because of heavy travel and those problems at the Chicago reservation center. ... Of the negative passenger comments noted, a good many centered on the reservations difficulty brought about at least in part by the very popularity of train travel this year that the negative thinkers have told us isn't possible. ...

I also have a dozen or more trips under my belt in this section of the country--from Richmond to Boston and west to Altoona on various occasions. Many of those trips were taken for no other purpose than riding a train and evaluating Amtrak. I recall the one-day round trip from Baltimore to Boston, on a snow-filled weekend which created all kinds of transportation snarls. Going up on the BAY STATE via Springfield, we pushed thru the falling snow which topped the rails, past a host of sidetracked freights on the old Boston and Albany and into South Station only a few minutes late. Many of the displaced air passengers forced onto the MERCHANTS LIMITED for the return trip weren't happy, but couldn't have been pleased if we were an hour early. Indeed we were almost an hour late leaving Boston, but more than held our own all the way back to Baltimore, even gaining a few minutes in the process in spite of the overflow loading and bad weather conditions. Indeed, most of my trips, from one hour to one day to over a weekend have been on or close to time with a minimum of problems. Most of this on the Penn Central, too.

Kenneth A. Maylath

Baltimore, Md.

I rode the northbound PRAIRIE STATE from Chicago in early September. Milwaukee's roadbed is rough as a cob, and the diner crew didn't seem overjoyed at having 8 or 9 people come into the diner at 10:30 for food. The waiter set the table in the usual manner--knives, forks, and spoons en masse, from a height of 18 inches. Amtrak has high hopes for the Milwaukee-Chicago corridor. It's the only place west of the original 13 colonies where there's any effort at providing service people can use. The highways from here to Chicago are either poor or poor-and-toll, and the trains I've observed carry a good load. They're not as fast as they used to be, or as the CNW was, nor are they as frequent as the North Shore was, but people do use them.

George H. Drury

Milwaukee, Wisc.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"I hope we do have a seasonal drop off in business--soon, because we need a breather. If I had predicted a year ago a 40% to 50% increase in revenue in our region for last month, I would have been fired for insubordination and would have been the laughing stock of your community. We weren't prepared for it. All the historical data is out the window--it won't help us."

--Amtrak Western Regional Sales Manager Dave Rosier, quoted in The Seattle Times Sept. 19

"Patronage on the COAST STARLIGHT-DAYLIGHT is one of the 1972 Amtrak success stories. They talk about it at Amtrak national headquarters in Washington just as proudly as they mention the METROLINERS, which do a land-office business on the New York-to-Washington run."

--Richard Rodda in the Sacramento Bee, Sept. 17

"There's a new commuter hop. No more reason to drive. AC Transit provides convenience and flexibility; BART, traffic-free speed, so car happy commuters have no more incentive to drive. Public transit is better than ever."

--Current AC Transit ad in San Francisco Bay Area

EAST COAST REPORT (contd. from p. 5)

VP-Planning, oil a few journals while the TV cameras rolled.

Springfield: A big crowd had made its way thru the decrepit depot to the platform, bringing Canadian and U.S. flags. I went downstairs and found the waiting room to be a frightening tomb--ceiling & walls had cracked green plaster, and the station was a total void except for a few bare fluorescent bulbs and a "Montreal" travel poster. There was not so much as one seat in the waiting room. But back to the celebration: The Boston & Maine conductor had proudly brought his uniform out of six years of storage, as did the Central Vermont man up the line. Both had been on the last runs Sept. 2, 1966. Shortly I went to sleep unintentionally, missing a reportedly stupendous crowd at Brattleboro at 4 a.m.

White River Junction: A brass band played as the train inched thru the crowd (over 1000). While CV took over the train, I squeezed my way into the waiting room, which was being done over in colonial style by the Vermont Association of Railroad Passengers. A local couple had donated $1000 for the work, and a box inside the station was filling up with more contributions. Collectors were being asked to contribute station furniture, and someone had already given the original ticket rack back. Also needed are some parts of the weathervane. A big crowd began filling the coaches, which had been empty since New York. The train was now some 2 hours late, but no one could care less. And it got later, due to a 10mph slow order on some 15 miles of CV track where a major tie renewal program was in progress.

Big crowds boarded at Montpelier Junction, Waterbury and Essex Junction, despite the rain. A band and approximately 2000 were on hand at St. Albans, and traffic ceased moving. At St. Albans yard, a CN crew got on, altho shortly crews will run thru White River Jct.-Montreal, with CV and CN people taking turns. At Cantic, Canadian customs boarded and worked into Montreal because of the crowd (coaches full leaving St. Albans), but on subsequent trips they will not ride but will delay the train.

Montreal: 2 hours and 55 minutes after the scheduled 10:05am arrival, we pulled into Central Station. Amtrak's timetable says 9:40 is the arrival time, but CN lengthened the schedule a day or so before the first run. Speeches were made by Roger Lewis and CN's VP-St. Lawrence Region and the mayor's representative. After a press conference, Amtrak VIP's and guests had a tour of Montreal. In the late afternoon, Amtrak arranged a buffet dinner for Montreal officials and travel agents at CN's Queen Elizabeth Hotel.

The first WASHINGTONIAN was minus one sleeper and the sleeper-lounge which were to return the next day. The train left Montreal 4 mins late, but was 2½ hrs late by Springfield and stayed that way to Washington. The train was delayed about 15 mins at Cantic where Canadian customs unsealed American liquor which they had sealed that morning northbound. The train stayed over an hour at St. Albans--45 mins at the yard for U.S. Customs and crew change, 15 mins at the engine terminal for fuel and water, and 5 mins at the depot unloading a great crowd. Incidentally, no baggage car was carried the first runs because of customs problems, but one will be added.

By White River Junction, the train, which had been full leaving Montreal, became almost empty, and the coach passengers aboard from there to Washington could have been carried in one coach. Service aboard was excellent, marred only by lack of heat in all cars except the first after St. Albans. Apparently a carknocker had accidentally closed the valve. The problem was corrected about 2 hrs later at Montpelier Junction.

In summary, it appears that Amtrak's Montreal route will be a fine success. Amtrak certainly conducted a fine operation on the first run, and the help of boosters such as the Vermont Association of Railroad Passengers made the run a holiday affair.

The Amtrak train has leg-rest coaches and a diner, which puts it a cut above the old train. There is stiff bus competition on the run, including 6hr 45 min expresses between the end points, but the train can win out because of its comfort and convenient overnight schedule. The fact that there were few long-haul paying passengers on the first runs reflects the fact that tickets went on sale only a day or so before the first run--in fact, there were fears that buses would be required for the CN portion, but agreements were finally reached. Timekeeping will improve when CV finishes its tie project, and the schedule will be speeded up 50 mins each way on the B&M Oct. 29 when track renovation is completed. Presently the train runs as an extra north of Springfield, which means that it must run prepared to stop in half the distance the engineer can see when within yard limits; when it becomes a regular train, timekeeping will improve. B&M's Pres. Barriger noted that the train certainly won't lose any money for his road. The train is paid for at the standard "detour" rate--cost plus a fee per mile. Thru Montreal-Miami cars are said to be in store for Dec. 15 and thereafter. My only suggestion to Amtrak is that the NIGHT OWL be routed via Springfield to enable the operation of a coach and sleeper between Boston and Montreal--thus adding revenue without adding trainmiles.

OTHER NEWS-- The enlarged 5-car Turbos were to begin improved service between Boston and New York Oct. 1. Trains were to leave Boston at 6:10am daily except weekends and at 9am daily. New York departures are 12:10pm daily except weekends and at 4:10pm daily. The Turbos have been running back and forth between Boston and their Providence maintenance base nightly since their inception, but without revenue passengers. Effective October 1, passengers may ride northward leaving at 7:50am, or southward leaving at 4:30pm and 8:30pm.

The Dept. of the Interior announced that conversion of Washington Union Station into a National Visitors Center should begin in October. Financing was originally to be handled by B&O and PC, the station owners, but PC went bankrupt. Now arrangements have been made for B&O to go it alone. Project will include one or two theaters in the main building, which will be leased by the Dept. of the Interior, and a new depot and parking deck over the track. Washington's Metro already is well under construction at the west side of the station, and the coach yard has been taken over as a subway servicing yard.

In August, NY-Washington thru riders on conventional trains increased 42% over 1971, while NY-Boston was up 78% and was also well ahead of 1970 and 1969.

All tracks have been removed from Canadian Pacific's Windsor Station in Montreal to allow for construction of the line's office skyscraper. Passengers must walk a good distance to board trains, which load at new platforms out back. The new platforms have no shelter from the weather. There is a rumor that CP's CANADIAN may move to CN's Central Station. It would be a fine thing, too, because a fine train like that doesn't deserve a station like Windsor. It is hoped, however, that CP can be prevented from destroying the Victorian facade of Windsor Station when the office tower is completed.

Amtrak's new Cincinnati depot opens Oct. 29. It's located on Penn Central along the Ohio River west of downtown. A site for its Richmond, VA, depot off Dabney Road was selected in late September.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AUTUMN LEAF Specials will run Oct. 21, 22, 28, 29 thru Virginia scenery. The non-Amtrak excursions will consist of 9 ex-B&O coaches, NRHS pullman, Pullman lounge & combine, & 3C&O/B&O coaches. Train runs west via James River line, with 4 open gondolas from Gladstone to Clifton Forge, returning via Charlottesville. Info from Old Dominion Chap., NRHS, Box 8583, Westhampton Sta., Richmond VA. This info from Steve Farrar (whose address, incidentally, is Box 3153, Lee Hall, VA 23603..... OXNARD DAYLIGHT? Yes, it happened. SP did tunnel work in the Santa Susana Pass to lower roadbed (will domes be able to go thru now???), and while the line was thus closed, the COAST DAYLIGHT & STARLIGHT ran only as far south as Oxnard, CA, since SP somehow found it could not detour the train over another route that would take a little longer. This created no end of problems, since Oxnard is not set up to be an Amtrak end point. Dining car provisions and crews, for example, had to be bused to Oxnard, for which purpose the poor workers had to arise at 5:30am. Passengers had to be bused the distance as well, of course. All this happened the first week of October. (SP is losing its touch--should have started on Labor Day weekend)..... OFF SEASON of autumn apparently isn't happening much anymore. Amtrak badly underestimated the consist sizes it would need this fall, so many people have been turned away so far. The puny consists assigned filled up quickly, and some agencies didn't bother to make waiting lists. Amtrak has reportedly taken steps to alleviate the problem by assigning longer trains. If you're traveling this fall, better make reservations early..... SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR arrived Oakland Oct. 10 with no less than 7 sleepers, illustrating the demand for passenger train space that's being felt..... PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL experienced enthusiastic reception, requiring a full diner be put on. Highest ridership in August was 172 on #194 Aug. 14 and 171 on #193 Aug. 12..... NEW HAMPSHIRE Association of RR Passengers passed out literature on first runs of the MONTREALER. Their address: Box 851, Hanover, NH 03755..... GREYHOUND IS reportedly upset about government funding of Amtrak's route to Montreal. Asked to reply to their complaint, Amtrak's Roger Lewis told a NY Times reporter, "When was the last time Greyhound built a highway?" Meanwhile Greyhound has begun advertising an Ameripass plan to see America on $2.50 per day. In the Northeast Corridor it advertises "If you'd rather ride to New York in brand new equipment, we'll put you on the right track." Accompanying picture shows new bus alongside shabby-looking railroad tracks..... AMTRAK ISSUED a supplement to the 2nd edition of its nationwide tariffs, effective Sept. 29. Major changes: cancellation of seat reservation charges on those long-distance trains that now carry non-reserved coaches; cancellation of special military fares for points outside the U.S.... AMTRAK CELEBRATED its victory in Oklahoma's court case over serving liquor in that state by offering a free drink to all its riders on the TEXAS CHIEF..... MONTREAL STAR printed a photo (Sept. 26) of a Turbotrain being trucked thru city streets. It reported Amtrak will buy two sets of them from Canada, and they were enroute to St. Hubert for installation of new engines. CN will put the other existing Turbos back into use, the paper said..... NEW HAMPSHIRE Air Pollution Commission has ordered the famous Mt. Washington Cog Railway to stop polluting the air with its steam engine. The Railway will ask for a variance..... READER RAILROAD has asked for permission to abandon its entire line, 23.5 miles, from Reader to Waterloo, Arkansas..... RESTORED SERVICE on the Boston-Concord and Boston-Dover runs may be in the offing. The New England Regional Commission approved a budget for next fiscal year that includes money for passenger service between Boston and New Hampshire..... WE ALWAYS knew the ICC operated years behind the times. Its Vice Chairman Robert C. Gresham recently told a Railroad Public Relations Association meeting in Virginia that rail travel is "dead as a dodo." And the same to you, Mr. Gresham..... RTN READER Joel McEachern of Flushing, NY, wrote a fine reply to that bad column in the Minneapolis Star (see our last issue) in which he told it like it is. The paper printed his letter prominently under the headline "Be patient with Amtrak."..... AMTRAK'S SERVICE to Mexico should be running by Christmas, is the latest report. The border crossing at Laredo is the biggest detail left to be settled.....

Urban-Suburban Transit

BART'S NON-DEDICATION AND NON-STOP

President Nixon rode a BART train September 27 in a "non-political" stop that made headlines around the nation. The entire BART system was closed to the public for the unannounced visit under tight security. President and Mrs. Nixon rode a 3-car train, consisting of cars 120, 505 and 119, from San Leandro to Lake Merritt station at top speed. A pilot train preceded the President's, and another followed. The Nixons rode backwards as they chatted with BART General Manager B. R. Stokes. Some BART employees knew of the impending visit, and were led to believe that Nixon would dedicate the system at that time. BART sold dedication day philatelic covers to employees, but the dedication didn't happen. Instead it was held October 11 when Transportation Secretary Volpe visited the system. Papers at first reported that Nixon had announced a grant for BART during his visit, but this proved erroneous. The system was shut down for two hours--from 10:30 to 12:30--for Nixon's ride.

BART unexpectedly made headlines again Oct. 2 when a two-car train failed to stop at the end of the line in Fremont, ran off the end of the tracks, through a sand barrier designed to retain runaways, and onto a parking lot, stopping just short of some parked cars. Only 4 passengers and the train operator were slightly injured. BART people were horrified at the accident on the fail-safe system. After intensive investigations, it was announced (Oct. 9) that a tiny crystal oscillator obtained from Bulova Watch Co. and installed by Westinghouse had been at fault. The oscillator vibrated at the wrong frequency, speeding the train up to 74mph when it should have slowed it to 27mph. The faulty part was tested in another train where it misbehaved in the same fashion.

As the train approached the Fremont station it slowed to 50, but then began accelerating instead of slowing to 27. The operator hit the manual stop control, and the train slowed down from about 60 to near 20 mph before it came to rest nose down in the parking lot. The second car remained on the track, as did the rear wheels of the lead car. The front car, #143, had considerable damage to its electronic gear undersides. It had been just delivered from the Rohr factory and had passed initial tests before being put into operation.

At Volpe's dedication Oct. 11 he announced a grant of $27.1 million to buy 100 more cars for BART.

A VICTORY FOR THE HIGHWAY LOBBY

While the Senate earlier had approved the use of $800 million from the Highway Trust Fund for rapid transit, the House October 5 rejected a bill to permit diversion of highway money into mass transit. The House also rejected legislation to control billboards on highways. The bill as finally passed by the House authorizes $8 billion in additional funds toward completion of the Interstate system, bringing the total costs up to an estimated $76.3 billion.

Secretary Volpe reportedly stood outside the House chambers and lobbied for support of the funds for rapid rail transit. The American Trucking Association and other highway lobbyists opposed the use of highway money for transit.

The bill now goes to a House-Senate compromise committee for ironing out differences before final passage.